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ABSTRACT

A project emphasizing prevention of potential learning problems through early identification and individual educational prescriptions is discussed. Children identified through a screening process will be placed in a modified primary class. They will receive a curriculum designed to develop skills required for successful participation in first grade. A continuum of placement will be available for children who have been identified through screening. An outgrowth of the project will be an outline of the areas to be included in the specially designed curriculum. (CK)

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by Dr. Barbara C. Smart, Title VI-G Project Director

EMPHASIS PREVENTION

Prediction, prescription, prevention through early intervention-- These terms summarize the focus of the Child Service Demonstration Project which is being developed in Anchorage under Section G, Children with Specific Learning Disabilities, Title VI, Education of the Handicapped Act, Public Law 91-230. Under this section, states are eligible to apply for grants totaling \$125,000 over a two-year period for the purpose of developing and conducting model programs designed to meet the special educational needs of children with specific learning disabilities.

Projects in eight states were funded under Title VI-G during 1971-72. Alaska is one of the fifteen additional states whose proposals were accepted for projects to be started during 1972-73. The original proposal, developed by Richard Anderson, Roy Fay and Leigh Lowther in Anchorage and John Anttonen in the Alaska Department of Education, has several unique features. The main emphasis will be on preventing learning disabilities through early identification and individual educational prescriptions. Under the grant, Barbara Smart, Roger Clyne and Jeanne Gaynor will seek to

develop a process whereby kindergarten children who are potentially learning disabled can be recognized before they have been faced with meeting academic expectations in first grade which are inappropriate for them because of their specific learning patterns and level of development. An additional year of kindergarten has not generally prepared such children for first grade because it has not been possible to provide the intensive specific training they require. Neither have they miraculously been able to "catch up" later when they have been promoted to first grade where their chances to succeed are doubtful at best. These children's disabilities are often compounded through repeated failure and the ever-widening gap between their level of attainment and that of their peers.

One of the eight objectives for the project in Anchorage is to find children before they have failed repeatedly. Children identified through a screening process will go from kindergarten to a modified primary class organized as a part of the regular school program rather than special education. There they will be provided with a curriculum planned to develop the skills which kindergarten and first grade teachers designate as prerequisites to successful participation in first grade. Within the general curriculum, an individual educational prescription

based on a thorough diagnosis will be developed for each child.

A continuum of placement alternatives will be available in the fall for children who have been identified through the screening process the previous spring. A child may go directly to a regular first grade because maturation, special tutoring or some other factor has alleviated the potential learning disability during the summer. Children may be placed in a modified primary class for part of a year and then transferred to a regular first grade in which they may be able to succeed. After spending an entire year in a modified primary class, a child may move into a regular second grade or a regular first grade; or, in rare instances, he may be reassigned to a modified primary class for a part of the succeeding year. If, during the time spent in a modified primary class, it becomes apparent that a child's learning disabilities are severe enough to warrant a special education placement, the diagnostic services provided during the year in the modified primary class will aid in locating the most suitable future placement for the child.

Screening for a pilot group of fifteen children will take place during December, 1972. The pilot class will be operated during the second semester of the current school

year. Between January and March, the screening process will be refined so that sixty children can be identified during the spring to be assigned to four modified primary classes which will be established for 1973-74. The screening process will be designed in such a manner that kindergarten teachers can use it with a minimum of special training or supervision. An outgrowth of the project will be an outline of the areas to be included in the specially designed curriculum with suggested materials and activities for developing the skills included in the curriculum outline.

For further information regarding this project, contact Dr. Barbara C. Smart, Title VI-G Office, Denali School, 148 East Ninth Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501.

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